

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ANTHROPOMORPHISM, AND THE PRINCIPLE OF REASONABLE SUFFICIENCY

Eduardo Viveiros de Castro

ANTHROPOMORPHISM VERSUS ANTHROPOCENTRISM

I will talk about my own work on Amazonian cosmopolitics. Bruno asked me to play the contrarian in this meeting. Not knowing exactly to whom or what I should play the contrarian, I decided that I will be the contrarian of all, the enemy of all. This all here will not be taken to mean you all, of course, but rather the all, *le tout*, the one. In other words, monotheism and its double faced creature: humanism and naturalism. I shall be speaking for pagans. In behalf rather than on behalf of pagans. I have no mandate from them, of course. But the nice thing about paganism or radical polytheism, understood in a certain sense, is that precisely you do not need to abide by any authority or scripture. The pagans I shall be speaking for do not have a scripture, they do not even have a script. They are illiterate. Their technological imagination and their theological imagination were applied to all the objects and all the aims. I will start, before getting into the present Indians, with two anecdotes concerning savages from the new world visiting the great cities of Europe. One dates from the sixteenth century and is to be found in Montaigne. The other dates from yesterday and concerns my visit to Venice.

In his famous essay *Des cannibales*, Montaigne describes the travel impressions of three Tupinambá Indians from Brazil. They were invited to come and see Paris, the King and the wonders of French civilization. Let us recall that at the beginning of the sixteenth century the Tupinambá were very likely a much more well fed and a healthy population than the French or the Europeans in general. They were certainly technologically less advanced but I am ready to bet they had a quality of life that was a few orders of magnitude better than the average European citizen of the times. And yet they were in the end destroyed by this unhappier and unhealthier European social organism and machinery. After having seen a lot of Parisian *vedute*

and being introduced to the King, they were asked through an interpreter what had most impressed them in the whole visit. And they said it had been three things: (1) Why so many big strong armed men suffered themselves to be bossed around by a child (meaning probably the *Dauphin*, the child King)? (2) Why that people let their other halves? Montaigne explains that the Tupinambá called the fellow men their moieties or other halves. Why did they leave their other halves to starve and die on the streets like that? (3) And why, finally, this starving half did not come up in arms and kill the other half so as to get a little of their food and riches? As you see then, what most impressed Tupinambá was not the material technology of the French but their lack of human technology, so to speak. This revealed itself to be a permanent motif of puzzlement to the Indians up to today: The violent disjuncture between Western culture (its technology tout-court) and Western society (the quality of its human relations). And the Indian problem has always been how to get hold of one without having to accept or swallow the other. Missionaries were critical elements in this complex situation.

The second anecdote refers to my visit to Venice. I confess to have been a little disturbed by the care dedicated to that fantastic feat of engineering: the Moses system. I am not being ironic here; it is a fantastic fit of engineering. While at the same time nobody seems to care of the tsunami of people washing over the city every summer, which is probably creating not a few problems for the native owner—the indigenous Venetians—as well as for the environment. I mean the stones, monuments, transportation systems, and sewages systems seem not to have found yet their own Moses system. I have been told that Venice lost one-third of its indigenous population in the past 15 years. This should be a matter of some concern to us. I am not certain what are the lessons to be drawn from this disconnection. There is an asymmetry between the care that is being taken to prevent the literal flood and the lack of care being taken to prevent the human flood that goes over Venice every summer.

But let us move to my Amazonian Indians in whose behalf I am supposed to be speaking here. Amazonian—or American, in the proper sense of the term—Indians in general have never been modern, also in the sense of having never been in nature and therefore never have been out of it. They have not transcended “nature,” as the special species that has that little, but whole crucial, *supplément d’âme* that distinguishes humans from the rest of creation. Indians form a humanity that does not define itself through its confrontation with nature. Such humanity is not the same humanity because if you have no nature then you have no humanity, in the same sense either. If that concept of the nonhuman is different from ours, the concept of the human will necessarily also be different from ours. We are not speaking of the same humanity with another nature. The two halves of the cosmo-anthropological equation must be changed at the same time: other technology, other theology; other physics, other metaphysics; other continuities, other discontinuities. What we would call nature is for Amazonian Indians an array of human like societies, alien to human beings as defined in the

West. Each living species and often many of the categories of objects, be they meteorological phenomena, celestial bodies, geographic features, artifacts, each kind of thing is human, is considered human in the sense of having an inner invisible side, which is its soul. So, each kind of being is a hybrid creature, to employ an expression used by Elizabeth. Just as man is, for us, soul, every being in Amazonian cosmos is a hybrid creature because it has a soul or, as we would say nowadays, because it has a cognitive apparatus similar to ours endowed with consciousness, intentionality, imagination, and so on. Most importantly, every being or every species of being sees itself, its own species as human. The soul is always humanoid and the soul is the side of beings that each being sees when it looks at itself, as it were when it looks at its fellow beings. The shape of a vegetable, as the shape of every being in the cosmos, is only a garment of skin, to use another term evoked here. A garment of skin that hides a humanoid inner form only visible to the eyes of conspecific or transspecific specialist like the shamans who are capable of shifting their species-specific point of view and see the world as other species see it, including how they see themselves and us. When a jaguar looks at another jaguar he sees a man, and so on. On the other hand, when a jaguar looks at us, he does not see a human being at all, but a wild pig, since jaguars, as every man, love to eat wild pig meat. That is why they kill and eat humans. Wild pigs, on the other hand, see us humans as jaguars or as cannibal spirit, because we kill and eat them. So, every being in the Amazonian cosmos is human or rather sees itself as human, including us, but does not see other species as human. In some, humanity is universal but at the same time is radically local.

So we can see that in the eyes of Amerindians—and eyes are a very important aspect of the whole thing because Indians describe the differences of perception in terms of the different eyes that each species has—everything is human, but everything is not human and cannot be human at the same time. A jaguar and human beings cannot be human to each other, at least not at same time, in the same respect, and in the same relation, as Aristotle would put it. But they are human to themselves and humans know it. That is why every interspecies interaction in the Amazon is an international affair, a diplomat talk or a warfare operation that must be conducted with the utmost care. When an Indian deals with an animal or a tree he knows he is dealing with a being that is human in its own department and this hidden humanity must be radically taken into account. Let us not forget that the Indians, like any other human being, like every other animal being, must eat or otherwise destroy all the species in order to survive. They know that to live is to leave a human footprint. The difference is that the soil that they tread is also human, meaning that the footprints are left on the body of other human beings because everything is human.

The basic tenet of Amerindian cosmopolitics is therefore what I would call anthropomorphism. We could call it anthropomorphic principle to contrast it with the anthropic principle as much as possible because anthropomorphism is, to my mind, the very opposite of anthropocentrism and, in my opinion, the alternative to it. We either get anthropocentrism or anthropomorphism.

There is no third solution. The idea of a single species lost in the cosmos is literally unbearable. And the difference between anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism is very simple. Anthropomorphism means that if everything is human, we are not a special species after all. There is nothing very much special about us because everything is like us. While anthropocentrism is quite the contrary, makes humans a separate species that has something else. Anthropomorphism as a principle is somewhat similar to the idea that Anne Marie Reijnen exposed to us before, of men being central but not privileged because centrality is a perspective not a property. Centrality is a position not an essence. Humans are not animals like the others because it is animals that are human like us. The common original condition of humanity and animality is not animality as in our popular evolutionary mythology, but humanity. Animals are ex-humans, not humans ex-animals and this former humanity of animals, in Amazonian thought, is never entirely lost just like our own animal nature is never completely lost, never completely controlled by our cultural garments, and is constantly threatening to come out violently in foot and claw. In dreams, in hallucinogenic induced visions, when one is ill, in shamanic trances, the human invisible side of animals comes to the surface of things as it were; this is the common condition of all beings, the universal anthropomorphic background of being, which is spirit or soul. This is not an ecstatic experience in the sense of being a blissful, wished for experience of transspecies communion. The Indians are not tree-hugging-people at all. If you live in a human saturated universe you have to be extremely cautious. The principle of precaution is deeply embedded in the Amerindian cultural software. When you approach any element of the environment you are approaching another human, so you have to be very cautious because, as we all know, the only dangerous thing in the universe is man. Indians know this perfectly well.

What about creation and fall? Amerindian myths see the origin of culture in society, that is, they see material and political technology—cooking fire, cultivating plants, social rules, and so on—as intrinsically connected to the origins of short life, in other words of mortality. The origin of culture is the origin of death. People die because they have culture. This is in the myth. This situation came about in myth not through any sort of sin committed by humans against a divinity but rather because of a mistake. Humans made the wrong choice when offered an alternative by a demiurge to choose between the call of the hardwood or of the softwood. Obviously, the Indians responded to the call of softwood. That is why we die early instead of being tough like hardwood trees. Humans made the wrong choice and ended up no longer able to live indefinitely by changing their skins as they grow bald, like snakes do, like some insects and some trees and like women, by the way, because Indians consider menstruation to be an internal change of skin. That is why women live longer than man. Now we know. So it was a bit of carelessness, a momentary lapse of reason, not a willful act of disobedience. And though we have lost long life this was not an entirely negative outcome. If people did not die there will be no space on this Earth to put and feed the future generations, say the Indians. How would we have children? They ask.

If Indians do have a cultural aim that is central in that of having children, constituting bodies of kin because people live in others, in their kin, with their kin. So, Indians are Malthusians after a fashion. They rather had the population remaining stable than increasing production or productivity, so as to make room for more people, more needs, and more worries. Immanence, I said, not bliss. The original state of creation, the hidden moment of indigenuous cosmology is one in which humans and animals were able to communicate freely with one another. More than that, this was a moment in which beings were as it were, transparent to one another. The body did not hide the soul. Any being in mythical time could be approached as being at the same time the human being it was and the animal it was about to be. Amerindian myths do not describe speciation, how animals lost their human side or how the human side move to the background and assumed, afterwards, a species-specific shape, a body precisely. Human is the original stuff nature is made of and this, to my mind, is the essence of Amerindian cosmopolitics or metaphysics or theology, the idea that the very stuff of nature is human. Regarding what we call nature, they would say, "Well, this is all made of human stuff." In line with this, there is a lovely Kashinawa myth that starts like this: "In the beginning there was nothing, just people." So, exactly the opposite of what we say: "In the beginning there was everything, everything was made and then people." I think this is an apt parable for the width of the difference that separates us from them.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COSMOPOLITICAL REINVOLVEMENT: THE PRINCIPLE OF REASONABLE SUFFICIENCY¹

"Whoever comes after will have to make do"

(*"An old Brazilian proverb"* in Warren Dean,

With Broadax and Firebrand: The Destruction of the Brazilian Atlantic Forest)

Geopolitics and Cosmopolitics

As the symbol that the *physis* chose as one of its guises around past century's end, Amazonia has now become an arena in which a decisive match is being played: the players involved, bringing together the micro- and macropolitical in unprecedented ways, compete over the meaning of the future. Leaving behind the dialectics of State and Nature, these two imaginary totalities that have been reciprocally constituted by a confrontation from which people and their myriad associations were always excluded (either represented by the first, or identified to the second), a new geopolitics now takes over. Exchanging the naturalization of politics for the politicization of nature, directly connecting the land to the Earth, thereby skipping over the old national territorializations, the geopolitics of environmentalism refuses to entrust the State with the guardianship of the infinite and the monopoly on

totalization. Along with the State, Nature—a certain idea of Nature—must be brought down as well. Geopolitics transmutes into cosmopolitics.

We could view things, of course, the other way around, seeing the old in the new. Environmentalist discourse may be read as the cosmology of late capitalism, a resacralization of history and geography that would close the cycle opened by the expansion of the West in the fifteenth century; a dramatic reterritorialization on a planetary scale of all those local, national, and continental deterritorializations that defined world history in the past centuries: the revenge of Totality. Environmentalism would thus mark the advent of a postenlightenment Dark Age: leaving the space-time of the relations between society and supernature, the discourse of finitude and transcendence would now be articulated in the confrontation between society and nature. The Amazon rainforest would occupy, no longer merely allegorically, the place of the gothic cathedral: the “sacred canopy” can now be admired on Google Earth, the *Hylea amazonica* (matter at its most luxuriant) would take on the austere shape of the Spirit. And Society, which not very long ago was the model of all order and of any Whole, would now see itself as the very idea of disorder, as the suicidal hubris that can only redeem itself if it accepts its subordination to an organismic totality that encompasses and determines it.

So perhaps environmentalism can be taken as a kind of repetition of Christianity—as both subverting and reinvesting, in the name of more total totalities and more concrete universals, the imperial abstractions of our modern Romes—with Brazilians, incidentally, in the ambiguous role of barbarians to be converted by the missionaries of this neogospel of the middle classes (a naturalist replay of the old Protestant ethic); barbarians, on top of that, entrusted with the Amazonian Grail, inadvertent warrantors of planetary salvation.

Perhaps this is all true; but environmentalism can also be seen as a radically new discourse, which refuses some of the founding partitions and basic categories of so-called Western rationality. In particular, it rejects the idea that *Homo sapiens* is the species-elect of the universe—by divine gift or historical (evolutionary) conquest—exclusively entitled to the condition of subject and agent before a nature seen as object and patient, as the inert target of a Promethean praxis. It problematizes the theologico-philosophical concept of “production” as the last avatar of transcendence—the idea that human produce against nonhumans, in an infinite movement of spiritualization that opposes matter (production as separation from nature). In exchange, environmentalism perhaps proposes an internalization of nature, a new immanence and a new materialism—a conviction that nature cannot be the name of what is “out there” because there is neither outside, nor inside.

If we understand nature that way, as a certain idea of the real, then nature designates the absolute limit of history. This is the predicament of our era: the Ecumene has been saturated by the human, culture has become coextensive with nature, ecology, and anthropology today coincide. As a reaction against the enclosing of the planetary commons, environmentalism imposes

a drastic revision of the paradigms of unending progress and perpetual development, which continue to guide our economic doctrines and ideological pipe-dreams. Our linear and cumulative conception of history—structurally blind to structure, to systemic circularities and reverse causalities—took too long to wake up to the fact that misery, hunger, and injustice are not the result of the still partial and incomplete character of the march of progress, but one of its necessary by-products, which increase as the march continues to move in the same direction. The Third and Fourth Worlds already are, because they always were, part of the First World, and they are everywhere. We went through the twentieth century with the mind of the nineteenth century; the future shock promises to be hard for everyone.

Social and Environmental Diversity

The diversity of the forms of life on earth is consubstantial to life as a form of matter. This diversity is the very movement of life as information, a form-taking process that interiorizes difference—the variations of potential existing in a universe constituted by the heterogeneous distribution of matter-energy—to produce more difference, that is, more information. Life, in this sense, is an exponentialization, a redoubling or multiplication of difference. This applies equally to human life. The diversity of ways of human life is a diversity in the ways of relating to life in general, and to the innumerable singular life forms that occupy (inform) all of the possible niches of this world. Human diversity, social and cultural, is a manifestation of environmental, or natural, diversity—it constitutes us as a singular life form, being our own mode of interiorizing “external” (environmental) diversity, therefore reproducing it. For this reason the present environmental crisis is, for humans, a cultural crisis, a crisis of diversity, and a threat to human life.

The crisis sets in as soon as we lose sight of the relative, reversible, and recursive character of the distinction between “environment” and “society.” Paul Valéry stated in the somber aftermath of the First World War that “we, European Civilizations, now know that we are mortal.” In this somewhat crepuscular beginning of the present century, we have come to know that, beyond mortal, “our civilizations” are lethal, and lethal not only for us, but for an incalculable number of living species—including our own. We, modern humans, children of the mortal civilizations of Valéry, appear to have forgotten that we belong to life, and not the contrary. Once upon a time, we used to know this. A few other remaining civilizations appear to know this still. Many more, some of which we have already killed, knew this only too well. But today, it has begun to be glaringly obvious even for “us” that it is in the supreme and urgent interest of the human species to abandon an anthropocentric perspective. If the demand seems paradoxical, that is because it certainly is; such is our present condition. But not all paradox implies an impossibility; the paths that our civilization has taken have not been at all necessary, from the point of view of the human species. It is possible to change direction, even though this means changing much of what

many people would consider to be the very essence of our civilization. Our curious way of saying “us,” for example, excluding ourselves from the “environment,” would have to change, for a start.

What we call environment is a society of societies, what we call society is an environment of environments. What is “environment” for one society will be “society” for another environment and so forth. Ecology is sociology, and vice versa. As the great ecologist Gabriel Tarde said, “every thing is a society, every phenomenon is a social fact.” All diversity is both a social and environmental fact; it is impossible to separate them without plunging headlong into the chasm thus opened and destroying the very conditions of our existence.

Diversity is, therefore, a superior value for life. Life lives off of difference; every time that a difference disappears, there is death. “To exist is to differ,” continued Tarde; “it is diversity, not unity, which is at the heart of things.” In this way, it is the very idea of value, the value of all value, so to speak—the heart of reality—which supposes and affirms diversity.

It is true that the death of some is the life of others and that, in this sense, the differences that form the irreducible condition of the world never annul themselves really, they merely change place (the principle of the conservation of energy). But not all places are equally good for us, humans. Not all places have the same value. (Ecological discourse is nothing but this: the evaluation of place.) Socio-environmental diversity is the condition of a rich life, a life capable of articulating the most number of significant differences. Life, value, and meaning, finally, are the three names, or effects, of difference.

To speak of socio-environmental diversity is not to merely affirm a truth, but is a call to arms. It is not about celebrating or lamenting a foregone diversity, residually maintained or irretrievably lost—an already-differentiated difference, static, taxonomized, and taxidermized difference, packaged into separated identities ready for consumption. We know how socio-environmental diversity, taken as mere variety in the world, can be used to substitute mock differences for true ones—narcissistic distinctions that repeat to infinity the apathetic identity of consumers, who become ever more similar the more they imagine themselves to “be different.”

But the arrow of real diversity points to the future, to a differentiating difference, to a becoming that goes beyond the plural (a simple variety subsumed by some superior unity) toward the multiple (a complex variation that resists totalization). Socio-environmental diversity is to be produced, promoted, favored. It is not a question of preservation, but of perseverance. It is not a problem of technological control, but of political self-determination, and metaphysical creativity.

Economic Development and Protection of Diversity

These days Brazil appears to be haunted by heady dreams of imminent grandeur. Against such millenarianism disseminated in my country—“our turn

has arrived!" (our turn for what, exactly?)—I am convinced that it is urgent, not to "stop to think," but to think so as not to stop; it is urgent to begin to think carefully so as not to stop altogether. We need to learn to degrow so we do not decay, rot, choke on our own filth. Brazil is big, as a local saying goes; yes, Brazil is big indeed—but it is a small world. In the dawn of this century the Earth is not at its best. The global patterns of production, distribution, and consumption of energy by our species are downright suicidal. My country is one of the few on this little planet of ours that still has full viability from the point of view of its resource base. Brazil boasts one of the most historically and culturally most diversified populations in the world: 220 indigenous groups, an immense number of African descendants, of European, Asian, and Near Eastern immigrants; rural and urban people of the most different ethnic and cultural origins living in a variety of natural formations that, in turn, are home to the richest biodiversity of the planet. Sociodiversity and biodiversity should be our major assets. But here we are, as always, insisting on sawing off the very branch we sit on, with policies of international trade that apply a model of development that is ecologically predatory, economically concentrating, socially impoverishing, and culturally alienating. We have devastated more than half of our country in the belief that it was necessary to forsake nature to embrace history; now look at how history, with its historical fondness for irony, demands we make that very nature our passport. I am afraid we will be found wanting.

The Space of Terrestrial Immanence

Contrary to what the Extraordinary Minister of Strategic Affairs, Roberto Mangabeira Unger, said in a recent interview, Amazonia is not a "collection of trees."² Collections of trees exist in botanical gardens or in the estates of the superrich. Amazonia is an ecosystem, a multiplicity composed of very conspicuous trees³ as well as an infinity of other living species—including human beings, who have been there for at least 15,000 years.

Amazonia was never devoid of people before the European invasion; on the contrary, its demographic nadir was reached after the invasion, with its epidemics, its methodical massacres, and with its forced "descents" of native populations for concentration around mission stations and commercial outposts. And the indigenous populations have found solutions of "sustainability," throughout these millennium of coadaptation with the Amazonian ecosystem (or ecosystems, as Amazonia has many, not only one), that are infinitely superior to the brutal methods of deforestation with herbicides, chainsaws, tractors, and other high-tech feats of jaw-dropping stupidity.

The Amazonian rainforest was always densely populated, and has been "ecologically managed" for quite a while; the majority of the useful species of the forest owe their dissemination to indigenous land-using techniques: Amazonia is a cultural forest, an anthropic environment. So it was never, or at least has not been for many centuries, more likely millennia, anything resembling "virgin forest." However, it does not follow from the fact that the

forest is no longer virgin that it is legitimate to rape it. Or does it? Consider the analogies.

Amazonia is suffering a violent process of aggression. I say Amazonia, not the so-called collection of trees; Amazonia in its entirety is suffering, its traditional human populations as much as their myriad of nonhuman living species. Rather than simply imitating the northern European, modernist religion of "economic development," an alternative model that puts the largest forest in the world at the center of the equation is called for, since we have arrived at a moment in the history of the planet in which life is the value that is in crisis—both human and nonhuman life. It is no longer possible to do politics without considering the space in which all real politics unfolds, the space of terrestrial immanence.

I use the word immanence deliberately here. Minister Mangabeira Unger said in a recent interview that the destiny of Man "is to be grand, divine; it is not to be a child imprisoned in a green paradise"; and that "all people [*pe-soas*, persons] are spirits who strive to transcend." Well, Amazonian Indians would agree with the minister that all people are spirits; perhaps they would not agree with the idea that only human beings are people or persons, but that is another problem. Certainly, however, they would not agree with the idea that all people "strive to transcend" in order to be "divine." This is an affirmation that would sound, to indigenous ears, distressingly similar to that which they have been hearing during the five centuries since the arrival of Europeans—the affirmation that they are children who need to bow to the divine message of decaying matter: rather transcendence in order to become full human beings, to wit, to be good Christians and model citizens (i.e., with plenty of faith and no land at all).

Indians are not "imprisoned in a green paradise" as the minister said. Amazonia is not a paradise; on the contrary, it is a laborious coadaptive construction, a system in dynamic equilibrium produced by the synergistic interaction of human (indigenous) technical ingenuity and the *sui generis* ingenuities of the sundry organisms that live there.

Indians are not imprisoned there. The idea that indigenous populations need to be "liberated," which Mangabeira Unger expounded in another, more recent text, seems to me to be grotesquely mistaken. Those indigenous groups who suffer from depression, suicide, alcoholism, as the minister laments, are precisely those who have been dispossessed of their lands—the Guaraní of Southern Mato Grosso, for example—not Amazonian groups like the Yanomami, a strong and happy people, precisely for having land that fits their vital and spiritual needs. The indigenous areas of Amazonia are the least deforested areas of the whole region; and they are the essential pieces in the process of juridical stabilization of the chaotic land distribution that made Amazonia into the paradise of illegal land appropriation, political assassination, drug trafficking, international smuggling, and government-subsidized corruption. And what does the ministry propose? A "program that will regularize landownership" that is nothing but a repeat of the loathsome principle

of *Uti possidetis*: the legalization of the private appropriation of public lands, which the rich and the powerful originally took with brute force.

Naturally, Indians suffer with various problems, many of them caused by the incompetence and/or corruption of the state agencies that should enforce the respect of their constitutional rights. But it also cannot be denied that the Indians have suffered other difficulties adapting to the socioeconomic (and spiritual) forms of Brazilian national society because they have chosen from very early on in history a civilizational route that is radically distinct to our own—and, which can be called the path of immanence as opposed to the path of transcendence.

Indigenous cultures are not founded on the principle that the essence of the human condition is desire, need, and lack. Their mode of life, their “system,” in the most radical sense, is other. Indians are the masters of immanence. What transcendence do we have, proud Brazilians, the self-appointed representatives of Reason and Modernity, to offer them? It is more probable that the Indians will liberate us than that we will liberate them. At least in spirit.

A Pragmatic of Reasonable Sufficiency

The problem, in sum, is that of finding an alternative way of life, because there is no alternative to life. To change the life we live—to change the way of life; to change the “system.” Capitalism is a politico-religious system whose principle consists in taking from people what they have and to make them want what they do not have—always and ever. Another name for this principle is “economic development.” With that we arrive right in the thick of the theology of the Fall, of the infinite insatiability of human desire before the finite means of satisfying them (see Sahlins, “The sadness of sweetness”). The economists are the priests and the theologians of our age. It is not by accident that Marx spoke of the metaphysical subtleties and of the theological astuteness involved in the concept of the commodity. But it is precisely this theology of development that we can no longer accept; we can no longer accept the equation between development and economic “growth.” The world of economics is paying renewed attention to the theses of N. Georgescu-Roegen on degrowth, the thermodynamic costs of the economy, and the idea that there exists an uneconomic growth that occurs “when increases in production come at an expense in resources and well-being that is worth more than the items made.”

Environmental degradation is an iatrogenic disease induced by physicians (progrowth advocates) who attempt to treat the sickness with unlimited wants by prescribing unlimited production. We do not cure a treatment-induced disease by increasing the treatment dosage. (Herman Daly)

To counter economic development, we must develop a concept of anthropological sufficiency. The notion of “sustainable development” is merely a means of making the notion of development sustainable, although it really

should have already been sent to the idea-recycling plant. But anthropological sufficiency does not mean *self*-sufficiency (“sustainability”), given that life is difference, is relation with alterity, is openness to an outside in view of its perpetual interiorization, and interiorization is always unfinished (the outside maintains us, we are the outside, we differ from ourselves at every moment). What is in question is self-determination, the capacity to define for ourselves a good enough life, as Winnicott spoke of a “good enough mother.” We do not need paradise, or a perfect mother; the “good life” is a good enough life. There is no better than enough.

Development is always deemed an anthropological necessity because it supposes an anthropology of necessity: the subjective infinitude of man (his insatiable desires) is in indissoluble contradiction with the objective finitude of the environment (the scarcity of resources). We are at the heart of the theological economy of the West; we are at the source of our economic theology of “development.” However, this economic-theological concept of necessity is, in every sense, unnecessary, what we need is a concept of sufficiency and not of necessity. Against the theology of necessity should be put forth a pragmatic of sufficiency. Against the acceleration of growth, the acceleration of transfers of wealth, or the free circulation of differences; against the economist theory of necessary development, let us devise a cosmo-pragmatics of sufficient action. Against the world of “everything is necessary, nothing is ever enough,” favor a world where “very little is necessary, almost everything is enough.” As Anne Ryan wrote, Enough is Plenty. Who knows, maybe if we learn to abide by this principle we will end up with a world to leave to our children, and their children. “Had we but world enough, and time.”

I conclude on a pessimist-fantast note, by saying that I have my doubts that we can escape the ecological crisis created by capitalism simply by means of the exercise of scientific reason and political will. I have therefore come to suppose that only a religious movement, a posthuman messianism, biocentric and geomorphic, can perhaps modify the conditions of our existence in a significant way. It is a matter, then, of shaking the religious foundations of Western culture, and perhaps even of human culture. Humans must mutate into another species to forestall their own extinction. Christianity was a radical innovation within the anthropological matrix; it redefined certain basic values of human society. Christ was an anthropological Messiah. Perhaps the imminent *parousia* will bring us a different Christ: a physical Christ, a thermodynamic Messiah. But of course, messiahs are not made to order. Okay then, let us say a religious antifundamentalism.

DEBATE

BRUNO LATOUR

Talking about your presentation, you said there is no alternative to the anthropomorphic, which I understand is very different from the

anthropocentric. Can you explain in some practical example what it means? Because from the outside it looks perilously close to the cliché view of the Indians as those who live in harmony with their ecosystem, they do not want to grow too much, they are very careful even though, of course, the reason for such a behavior—as you beautifully described it—is completely different from any sort of ecological thought. It is not out of respect for the environment and nature, it is, on the contrary, because they generalize anthropomorphism. But, in terms of diplomacy, of care and caution what are the consequences?

EDUARDO VIVEIROS DE CASTRO

When I said that anthropomorphism is the only livable alternative from anthropocentrism, I said livable not conceivable. There are many other conceivable alternatives. From an existential and anthropological point of view, humans will always be central in the sense that we have no other choice because we can only see the world from the point of view where we are. Humanity will always stay a human centered perspective but then you have an alternative, either saying that this perspective actually circulates in the universe and every being can take this perspective or you consider yourself as the only legitimate occupant of that position. I think these are the only alternatives. For Amerindian anthropomorphism, humans are not privileged. The human perspective is not privileged from a general point of view but it certainly is privileged from a human point of view. The Indians do not think that seeing the world like a jaguar is as good as seeing the world like an Indian. They say “It is as good as seeing the world like an Indian if you were a jaguar but we are not jaguars.” They are very clear about that. It is not about everything; it is not a fusion or a sort of paradise in which every being is the same as every other being. Actually, what makes the world dangerous is precisely because jaguars are human not because they are not human. There is this Indian saying that Irwin Goldman, a very good ethnographer of the North West Amazon: “The fierceness of the jaguar is of human origin because jaguars do not kill people normally, if a jaguar kills a man you can take my word this is not a jaguar. It is a man. This is the man inside of the jaguar.” So what makes the world dangerous is the fact that it is saturated with humanity, not because it is devoided of humanity. They are no *pris d’effroi devant ces espaces infinis*. They do not think that solipsism is the major problem. The lack of communication has never been the problem of the Indians. It is an excess of communication that is the problem.

ANNE MARIE REIJNEN

I won’t let you off the hook so easily. I would precisely like to come back to that part of your presentation. First of all, I would like to say that I found it extremely promising, and I really hope that I will be able to integrate some of

your perspective, but I have to be sure that I understand where the common place may be, where we meet.

Hence my question: is there a contradiction when you wish for the mutation from the human species into some unknown "X," and when at the same time you agree that there is no alternative for human beings for being human? Then there is also, it seems, a contradiction with wishing for a *deus ex machina*, when the overall category that you would like to impose or to propose is the "good enough." If it is good enough, then should we not do some *bricolage* with what is there? Specifically, you say in the beginning there was nothing, just people. And would you then accept that in the end there will be nothing, just people, rather than to wish for a thermodynamic Messiah, which would be I think to let yourself led astray by fanaticism or escapism? This is a good enough world. It can be a good enough world.

EDUARDO VIVEIROS DE CASTRO

That is a tough question because "in the beginning there was nothing, just people" was not a pleasant situation at all. It was just an initial situation. I think if in the end we get only people again, this is going to be a disaster and this is actually a disaster that is predicted time and again in Amerindian mythology. So it is common having Amerindian mythology about successive earths that get destroyed in a new earth coming over it because earths get excessively populated or people get too wicked. Due to these successive floods, successive destruction and creations, in the beginning and in the end we are going to have only people. What was the other contradiction, Anne Marie?

ANNE MARIE REIJNEN

Between the good enough and the second coming, the mutation, the post human. Which is your form of transcendence?

EDUARDO VIVEIROS DE CASTRO

How to become another species? Maybe there is a contradiction, I am not sure. If everything is human, as in Amerindian cosmology, then the human is an entirely different thing, to begin with. So it is not simply a question of generalizing the human condition. Once you do that, the human condition gets much more complex, much more internally complex, because it is not only the case that jaguars are humans at the bottom, it is also that humans have a jaguar inside. And so humanity becomes a far more interesting proposition.

ANNE MARIE REIJNEN

I am reminded of Giordano Bruno who said that until we accept our animal nature, we cannot be human. Another illustration of the point I made

earlier: there is so much in the Western tradition—the Heterodox thinkers of the Christian tradition—that is there and that we just need to bring back into the limelight.

EDUARDO VIVEIROS DE CASTRO

Yes. We have taught in our sociology classes to think that humans project their humanity unto the cosmos. What I think Indians do is exactly the opposite: bears and jaguars are as much human as humans are bear like, and jaguar like. They also introject the cosmological qualities in themselves.

BRUNO LATOUR

Do I understand you right that shamanism, this capacity of introjecting human qualities distributed everywhere, including inside humans, is really for you an alternative to nature? That it would be better than Creation or creativity to establish the basis for diplomacy? And that the reason is that it would oblige everyone to be extra careful, to exercise care, because it would make you be especially attentive to the encounter with all sorts of other entities?

EDUARDO VIVEIROS DE CASTRO

Absolutely. When I said that we have no alternative except anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism what I was actually hinting at is the idea that the only proper way of actually feeling the need to have care for creation is to infuse it with human qualities and not with human dangers. I insist Indians think the world is a very dangerous place to be, precisely because it is saturated with humanity, and our world nowadays is saturated with humanity in a slightly different sense, but in the sense that it is totally technologized. We live in a very similar world to the Indians, in a slightly different way, different not metaphorically but literally. I think this care should be lived as a kind of consequence of the anthropomorphic principle. The anthropocentric principle leads you inevitably to carelessness, to mistakes, *gaspillage*, to waste. I prefer the “good enough” life, a concept that I love. Winnicott’s idea of a good mother is a good enough mother, a perfect mother is a terrible mother. A good enough mother is what a child needs to be properly transformed into a proper human being. Just a good enough mother. Do not over do it. There is no better than enough, and I think we should try to apply this principle to mother nature as well, to Gaia as well. A good enough Earth would be all right. A good enough life rather than a perfect life, better and better, every time better life that would lead us to a psychotic situation, a collective psychosis. It is precisely what happens when the child has a too good mother. I think our Western civilization is a perfect case of collective psychosis, due precisely to our striving for the perfect mother or father.

ELIZABETH THEOKRITOFF

I am totally fascinated both by your paper and your oral presentation. And as somebody was quoting yesterday, I could also say that you are telling us our story. I am constantly reminded of what I've read of the mythology and traditional world of the Alaskan peoples—not that I am expert on this, but I know something about it mainly from the work of Father Michael Oleksa, who is an Orthodox priest who has served most of his life in Alaska. His wife is a native Alaskan; as you probably know, the Alaskans are for the most part Orthodox Christians. But in a very interesting way, much of their traditional worldview has quite seamlessly been taken into their Orthodox Christianity: and I am extraordinarily struck by the parallels between the worldview, the understanding that you are describing, and that which is basic to Orthodox Christianity. Even the idea that “at the beginning there was nothing but people.” What do we Christians say? “In the beginning there was the Word.” The Word is the prototype, the archetype according to which man is created “in the image.” The Word is also the one who will become man. The image, the reflection of the image in man that we talk about can also be described as “rationality.” It is the same word in Greek, *logos*. When you say “rationality” in English today, people think of it in a very narrow sense. It is commonly taken to mean a capacity for speech and discursive reasoning that distinguishes man from the “dumb beasts.” But an integral part of the traditional Christian understanding of man's rationality is that, because we are in the image of the divine *Logos*, we therefore appreciate the *logos* or rationality that is in everything because everything was created through the Word (*logos*) of God. In other words, we live in a world in which every thing images the Word in whose image we ourselves are made. Now, that is not the same as saying that everything is human; but there is, as it were, a triangle, in which all creatures are connected by the Word who is also the archetype of man. Our humanity and rationality refers to the Creator Word; and everything else also refers and relates to the Creator Word, rather than directly to us.

I also wanted to comment on the idea of a soul in all things: again, I remember Father Michael Oleksa writing about the traditional Alaskan depiction of the sun and moon with a face, and he comments that this is not anthropomorphism in a negative or crude sense. It is saying that in a certain sense, these are personal beings as we are. Obviously, in the Christian tradition we do not believe that the elements are literally animate. We do, however, believe that they too reflect the Word through whom they were created.

It almost seems that we also have in your presentation the idea of the “garments of skin,” in the sense that I discuss in my paper, when we say that death is both a consequence of a mistake and also a blessing, because otherwise the Earth, as we know it, would become unlivable. And indeed, it seems to me that there is some parallel with the cosmic ramifications of

the fall in saying, for instance, that the fierceness of the jaguar is of human origin. As I said, the parallels are really quite extraordinary: there is so much here that can be taken up, echoed, and understood on the basis of Christian cosmology.

EDUARDO VIVEIROS DE CASTRO

You make a distinction that I didn't make. I said everything is human. Actually, the proper translation for this very common statement in Indian languages is "everything is people," rather than human. Precisely because the notion of human species is not exactly what is at stake. Everything is people, everything is a subject and is capable of subjectivity. When a jaguar looks at the mirror or looks at another jaguar, he says "humans are anthropomorphic entities." So, people see themselves as humans, including us, we have no privilege. Humans see themselves only as humans but all the animals disagree with us, about us. Our essence is actually very much at risk: we do not know who we are, that depends on who is looking at us. We think we are human, jaguars think so too.

ERIC GEOFFROY

Is the idea of "Thermodynamic Messiah" coming from your own imagination or does it rest on some shared beliefs?

EDUARDO VIVEIROS DE CASTRO

I think this is as good a prophetic ending as anything else. It is not a joke at all or it is a serious joke. I do believe that we need something equivalent to the revolution that Christianity introduced in human history but no longer with a focus on moral interhuman relations that is typical of Christianity. It has tended more and more to be that, in the sense that Christianity has become more and more inwardly, so leaving the world, abandoning the world. Not Christ but Christians. What kind of God will save us? I would say only a thermodynamic Messiah, meaning a very physical one. One who is really worried about the second law of thermodynamics and I do believe that science will not get us out of it. Politics will not get us out of the mess if defined in too narrow terms. So we do need some sort of new messianic movement. Messiahs are not made to order, we can't tailor them, we can't engineer them; there are no genetically modified messiahs (GMO).

I do think that we will eventually face the explosion of a myriad of messianic movements all over the planet, all of them having a very strong ecological component. Just like Zimbabwe people, and this is probably going to burn like wild fire if things start getting either really or imaginarily worse. We are going to see lots of candidates to be the new thermodynamic Messiah and of course the Jews will say of them all: "No, this is not the true one."

ANDREA VICINI

You emphasized the role of the subject. From an anthropological point of view, my knowledge of ethnic groups, however, places the subject within the community. The subject is inseparable from the community. Our own Western understanding of the person as an individual is out of place in these communities. The person always belongs to a network of relationships. She cannot be understood without those connections. Even in the expression "people" I understand a specific "community," a web of relationships.

EDUARDO VIVEIROS DE CASTRO

That is a very good remark, very perceptive, because indeed all these people are species. Subject is a society, it is not the jaguar. It is the jaguars as a society, as a collective, as a community. We are talking about collective subjectivities. That is why I emphasized the idea of kinship, having children, living in kin and with kin. Because there are no isolated individuals in this world. You are always part of a community. So, the idea that everything is human, everything is person, everything is people also means that everything lives in a community. An isolated individual is not human, you can only be properly human if you live in a society. The difference is that they think there are many different societies on Earth; the environment is a society of societies. There is no difference between society and environment, as the subject versus the object. Actually, the object is just another subject or collection of subjects. There are subjects everywhere and all of them are collective. Indeed, it is a community based view; Indians are communitarians of a sort.

ANDREA VICINI

As a consequence, our salvation will not come from an isolated Messiah. But it will depend on how we become more and more *one* people, an interconnected community, even an interconnected web of species within creation. Otherwise, it seems that we are alimentering an unrealistic expectation that comes from an unrealistic understanding of reality. We should avoid expecting that only God will save us, that only human beings will save us, that only technology will save us, and so on. By risking to oversimplify the complexity of reality, the history of anthropology, the history of humankind, and the history of religions point us in the opposite direction: when we will be an authentic society, an authentic community, we will fully save us.

EDUARDO VIVEIROS DE CASTRO

To wait for an individual Messiah seems to me not only nonrealistic but not very efficacious either. That is why all of us are betting in the multiplication of messianic movements all over the world. We will start claiming messianic messages. We will always be preaching a radical reorganization of society as

well. This is what messianic movements are all about, about the reorganization of the societies.

ANNE MARIE REIJNEN

I was thinking about the one and the many. It is a common misunderstanding about Christianity that we are a monotheism. We are not! The God of our faith is a Trinity; God is sociality. The relations between God and humankind through Jesus the Christ is expressed by Luther's *communicatio idiomatum*. It is also expressed in the orthodox idea of Trinity as the *perichoresis* that is persons of the Godhead going round, a holy dance as it were. You keep talking about Christianity as a monotheistic religion but we have a Trinity. I will let you sort this out with the Jews and the Muslims, in the sense that they seem to be very monotheistic. Still, I do not think three is enough as far as the many is concerned. I think three is very little. I would rather go for the many in an indefinite sense. What we need is an infinite number of persons, of divine persons. Three is already a way to show us the way, three is not a number. That is a very naive understanding of the Trinity. The Trinity is a structure.

EDUARDO VIVEIROS DE CASTRO

Are you saying that there is no monotheism at all? Nowhere? I find it very disturbing and at the same time very comforting.

MATTHEW ENGELKE

This is a fascinating discussion. I am learning Anne Marie is Durkheimian and that Eduardo is a Hindu. But I want to get back to the point about Christianity as a radical innovation within the anthropological matrix. Because this relates to the appeal by certain atheists or philosophers, among them Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek, to the Christian tradition, and particularly to Paul, precisely for this kind of claim to radical innovation. Paul is a model of radical innovator. I wonder what is the radical innovation of Christianity.

EDUARDO VIVEIROS DE CASTRO

I think there are better qualified people around this table to tell us about that but Christianity invented a new concept of humanity, and it is probably the only radical moral innovation in the history of the West. It is interesting that Christianity came from the margins of the Empire, and that the idea of thermodynamic Messiah came to me when I was reading the book *Empire* by Toni Negri and Michael Hardt. And I was thinking who is going to be the Christian or the Christianity of this new modern empire, who is going to play the role that the Jews or the Jewish sect played in the Roman Empire, which was completely subverted from the inside and was co-opted by the

Empire. That is why it reached universal domination. But let me be frank on how to define in a few words what is the radical innovation of Christianity: a radical innovation in the anthropological matrix.

SIMON SCHAFFER

I think political economy is the most radical innovation in the Western tradition. And it dwarfs Christianity and all other religions. It systematically refused to make a move many apologists often make, which is to say: “do not look at what my believers do, look at what they believe.” Political economy says exactly the opposite: “Do not look at what my people believe, look at what they do.” That is the opening not just of Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations* but also of Adam Smith’s most Amerindian work, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. This latter book was Adam Smith’s attempt to work out how the exchange of perspectives makes societies and *The Wealth of Nations* works out how the exchange of goods makes value. Those are the two key aspects of political economy.

NOTES

1. This text was written as a reply to a number of statements made in 2008 by the then Extraordinary Minister for Strategic Affairs of Brazil, the political scientist R. Mangabeira Unger. During Mangabeira’s brief ministerial mandate, Marina Silva, the Minister for the Environment, was forced to leave the government, thanks to the aggressive anti-environmentalist policy of the ruling faction of the Workers’ Party, which counts in its ranks both President Lula and his Chief of Staff Dilma Russeff, now the leading candidate to the next presidential elections.
2. Actually, Unger said that Amazonia was “more than a collection of trees; it has people in it” —people who needed state-sponsored development brought to the region, of course. So Amazonia is, according to the minister, a collection of trees plus a number of human subjects of the State who would rather be anywhere else than amidst said vegetal collection.
3. Amazonian rainforest is a rhizomatic assemblage—let us recall that trees in the Amazon region have relatively shallow roots, supporting themselves mostly thanks to their intricately interlocked superficial radicular system as well as by their enormous buttresses, and feeding to a substantial extent off of their decaying matter: rather than growing in the soil, they grow their own soil.